

Geopolitics

I was born in Champigny sur Marne in the close Paris suburb, and grew up in Paris. As the French capital city, it is still today the most visited place in the world. From the 19th to the 20th century, the city developed a lot by merging the surrounding cities, creating business centers like « La Defense » right outside of its city limit. The Paris landscape is known thanks to its sky line including the Eiffel tower, Notre Dame or the Montmartre hill and the Sacre Coeur church. Its also known for its special and unique French atmosphere, which is the reasons why so many people who seek this, come to Paris. Meanwhile, even though Paris is still Paris to me, I saw the city changing a lot from the time I was born until now.

Here's how I could describe Paris with Agnew's three aspects of a place, and how did it change overtime:

- Location: Paris is the first destination in the world for visitors. It is known for being the heart of the French culture, gastronomy, and is also the heart of the French economy, with a gross domestic product of 6.07 billion of euros.¹ Given its reputation as a tourist place, the employment mostly concerns services, accommodation, catering, luxury and handcraft workers. Still faithful to its image, people from around the world still come to Paris for its culture and Gastronomy; many of the tourist services have been improved throughout the years, the creation of new restaurants and hotels, the destination management companies proposing new tours and services like street art tours or Metro orientation tours. Museums also increased in size like the Louvre museum and the Louvre-Lens.
- Locale: As the French capital city, Paris is also the residence of the president, the prime minister and also the two parliament chambers (the nationale assembly and the senate); because of that, Paris is often the scene of different politically related demonstrations, such as gay marriage, climate change, or more recently, the weekly « yellow jackets » demonstration. This has an impact on tourism, as people fear to come to Paris because of all those events. Moreover, these demonstration and the regular strikes we experience on the subway network, contributes to the cliché of French people, always on strike and protesting against everything. That being said, the city of Paris itself experiences huge changes due to the successive mayors, Delanoë and Mrs. Hidalgo, who want to change the whole city, creating new public transportation, bike lanes, reduce the use of cars in the city center, remodeling streets and avenues. The image of Paris changed a lot also because of the terrorist attacks that took place in 2015, and the map of « no-go zones » published by the American news channel Foxnews.
- Sense of place: Paris is known for being the heart of the French atmosphere, an image built by the French people itself; but it is also a place of cosmopolitanism, with its huge China Town in the South-east part of the city, the Indian and African community in the 10th and 18th arrondissement in the north. Moreover, one of the Paris district in the North called « La Chapelle » is sadly known for being the place where many immigrants dwell. This phenomena increased a lot during the past ten years and this is part of the big changes I noticed. Also in the heart of Paris, the Marais - where both Jewish and Gay communities are - changed a lot and identified more as it is, thanks to the mayor of Paris, with the use of Gay flags on the street signs and also on pedestrian crossings.
- Example of contestations: The city of Paris merged a lot of tiny cities around it in the 19th century, like Montmartre and Grenelle, and continue to increase its size with the Greater « Grand » Paris project. Building this new and huge city implicates creating new means of transports and developing the existing ones. The construction of new subway lines surrounding the city and the suburb and connecting both airports of Charles-de-Gaulle and Orly lead to

¹ https://www.manageo.fr/geo/ile-de-france-_reg11/paris-_dep75/paris-_vil7111.html

many protestations, mostly by people being evicted from their homes². Also, the Gay district being decorated with pride flags lead to many protestations from people against that identity, removing the flags from the street.³

How is Paris connected to other places?

Throughout the years, Paris developed transportation hubs to connect it with the world, such as Orly and Charles de Gaulle airports, the building of the Eurostar allowing travelers to travel from Paris to London by train in only 2 hours and 30 minutes. As it is a cosmopolitan city, Paris is also connected to many other places like China (with the China Town district), Japan (in the Opera neighborhood), India (in the Goutte d'Or district in the north) and also Africa and Maghreb, with a large community living up north.

How does Paris's past history influences its present and future?

From the middle-age to the industrial era, the face of Paris thoroughly changed thanks to the Baron Haussmann, who built large and wide avenues on the right bank, also the construction of new buildings, Notre Dame, The Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel Tower; all of this contributed to model Paris as it is today. Now, Paris is still remodeling, increasing in size with the Greater Paris, building new public transportation services. The Paris history influences its present and its future as new needs are created, for instance due to the global warming, the use of cars is more and more restricted and the shape of the old streets and avenues needs to be changed and adapted to the use of buses and bikes. Also, the increasing size of Paris is part of its history and it's continuing on. From 12 arrondissement, Paris went up to 20, and maybe more in the future with all the suburb cities merging with Paris. This might change the identity of the city and the image that people in the world feel about Paris. Perhaps this evolution of the city will change its image, from a quaint town with clear borders, to a huge metropolitan town with no limits, such as New York City or London for example.

² <https://94.citoyens.com/2017/une-expropriation-liee-a-la-gare-grand-paris-express-de-bry-villiers-champigny-au-tgi-de-paris,31-05-2017.html>

³ <https://www.marianne.net/societe/homophobie-lgbt-hors-de-france-tague-dans-le-marais-paris>